Number Ten

CRIMINAL™

Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips

image®

by
Ed Brubaker and
Sean Phillips

Colors by
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Criminal
Cruel Summer
Part Six

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Two Roads to Hell

Still, he couldn't stop getting drunk every night...

Even though he knew better.

He'd been on this hunt too long...

And he felt lost in the woods...

...or the jungle.

At least the drinking let him sleep.

Let his mind stop spinning in circles around the girl...

JIM BEAM

Jane.

He'd tracked her to Bay City because of the man she was with - ***Teeg Lawless***.

But the guy's ***last known address*** was vacant... No way of telling for how long.

And the landlord was no help...

WE DON'T ANSWER A LOTTA ***QUESTIONS*** AROUND HERE, COP.

I'M NOT A -

FUCK OFF!

According to her ***police record***, Jane lived here for a while in the '70s...

But the only people who remembered her were at a ***dive bar*** on the wrong side of downtown.

YEAH... SHE ***BARTENDED*** A FEW NIGHTS A WEEK...

THE GUYS USED TO CALL HER SWEET JANE.

And none of them had seen her in ***ten years***, at least.

ALWAYS ***WONDERED*** WHAT HAPPENED TO HER...

SHE WAS ***HELL ON WHEELS***, THAT ONE.

YEAH, I BET SHE WAS.

SHIT.

KING JOE'S

King Joe's

So it wasn't going to be ***easy***...

But Farraday never gave up just because the trail went cold.

If ***this*** was where Jane and this Teeg character had run to when they left him lying in that parking lot...

Then he would find them.

But Teeg Lawless was a felon who made his living with a gun.

Farraday couldn't go around flashing his photo and asking questions.

He'd have to be more careful... and get lucky.

So he drifted around town for a while...

Checking out some underground card rooms and strip joints.

Just paying attention to the background noise, as he blended in with it.

Listening for names...

Looking for Jane's *red leather* across smoke-filled rooms.

For the first few days, he just nursed his drinks, pretending to be plastered a few times, to maintain his cover...
But at some point, he wasn't sure when, he stopped pretending...

Each day that passed with no sign of her... No new leads...

A small root of despair grew inside him.

At night, he'd read her file over and over again...

Trying to imagine what it would be like when he found her...

When he saved her from this ***savage*** she was shackled to...

He pictured the two of them on the highway, going a hundred miles an hour...

Her hair caught in the wind, her lips laughing. Happy.

The rest of the world receding behind them...

Fading into the rearview mirror.

And it felt good, it felt right...

Like the future that was meant to be.

Like justice.

NITE-LIGHT

MOTEL

VACANCY

But... What if his hunch was *wrong?*

What if Jane and her savage hadn't come back here?

What if she was a thousand miles in the opposite direction...

Just getting further and further away?

YOU WANT PRIVATE DANCE?

WHAT?

I SAID, DO YOU WANT *PRIVATE* DANCE?

And when Farraday thought about that too much...

WE GO IN *BACK ROOM*...

He started letting the booze make his decisions for him.

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU WANT.

HOW ABOUT SOMETHIN' *ELSE*...?

I MEAN - HOW 'BOUT I *PAY YOU* FOR SOMETHING ELSE?

WHAT?

I'M LOOKING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT A GUY NAMED TEEG LAWLESS...

I MIGHT KNOW THIS NAME.

WHY YOU LOOK FOR HIM?

I'M *NOT*... I'M JUST TRYING TO FIND A *WOMAN* HE KNOWS.

HOW MUCH YOU *PAY?*

IF YOU CAN HELP ME *FIND* HIM... LIKE... *TWO HUNDRED BUCKS?*

OKAY...

WAIT FOR ME IN BACK OF *PARKING LOT* AFTER WE CLOSE.

MY *FRIEND* KNOWS THIS MAN.

Even drunk, Farraday knew it was 50-50 this girl was just planning to rip him off.

But he figured he could handle himself.

And maybe her friend really ***did*** know where to find Lawless... ***That*** was 50-50, too... right?

EXIT

Except her "friend" was actually two of the club's ***bouncers***...

And all ***either*** of them knew was that Farraday had ***cash*** on him.

And it turned out he couldn't handle himself after all.

The saddest part of the whole thing?

When he got back to his motel, there was a message waiting.

Someone from that ***dive bar*** Jane used to work at.

Jane had been there, just that night...

While Farraday was out being ***stupid***.

HOLY SHIT...

And just like that...

...His despair turned into hope.

It would be another week before he found her...

And he would drive down the same streets over and over again...

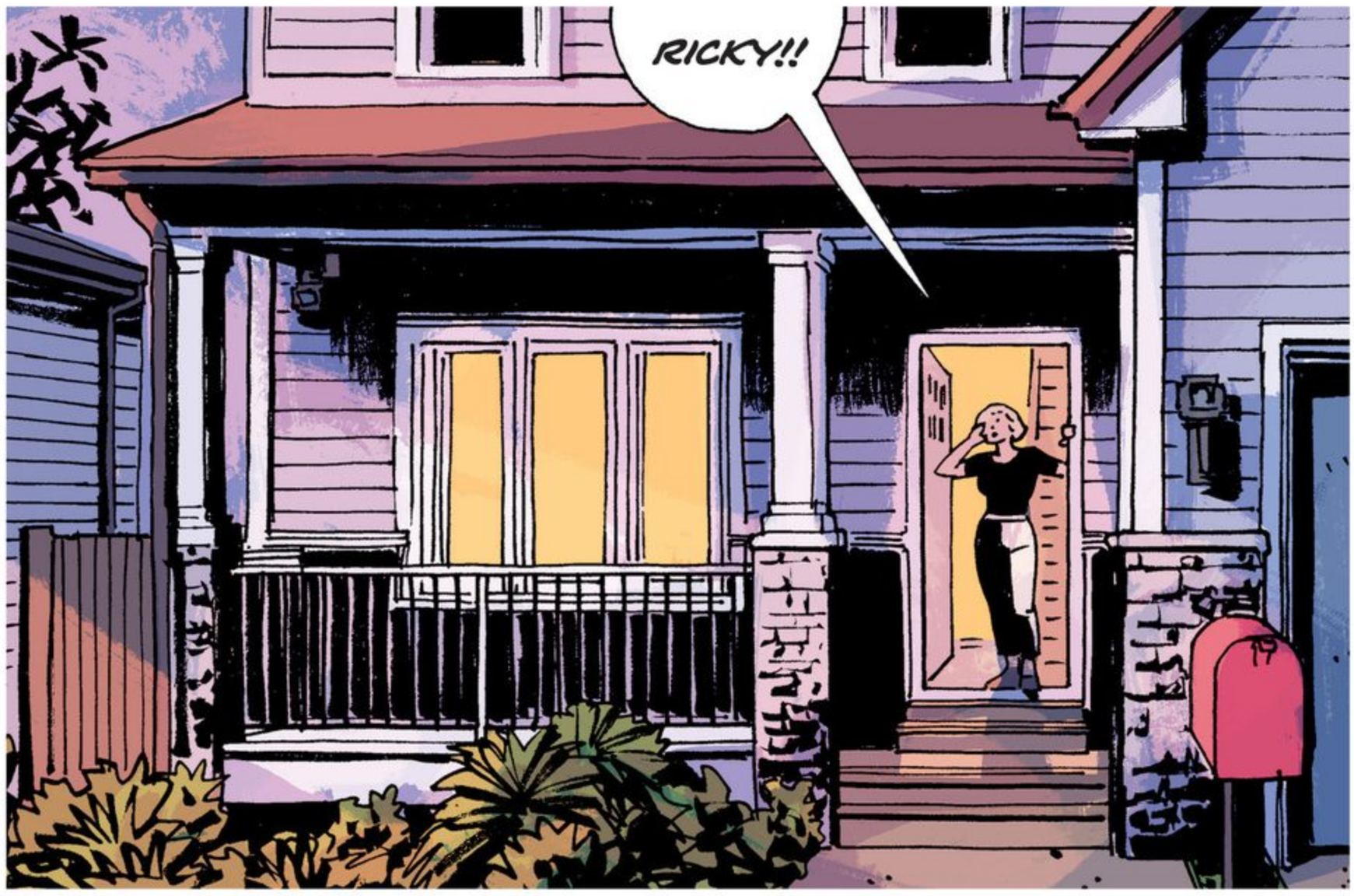
Finding nothing.

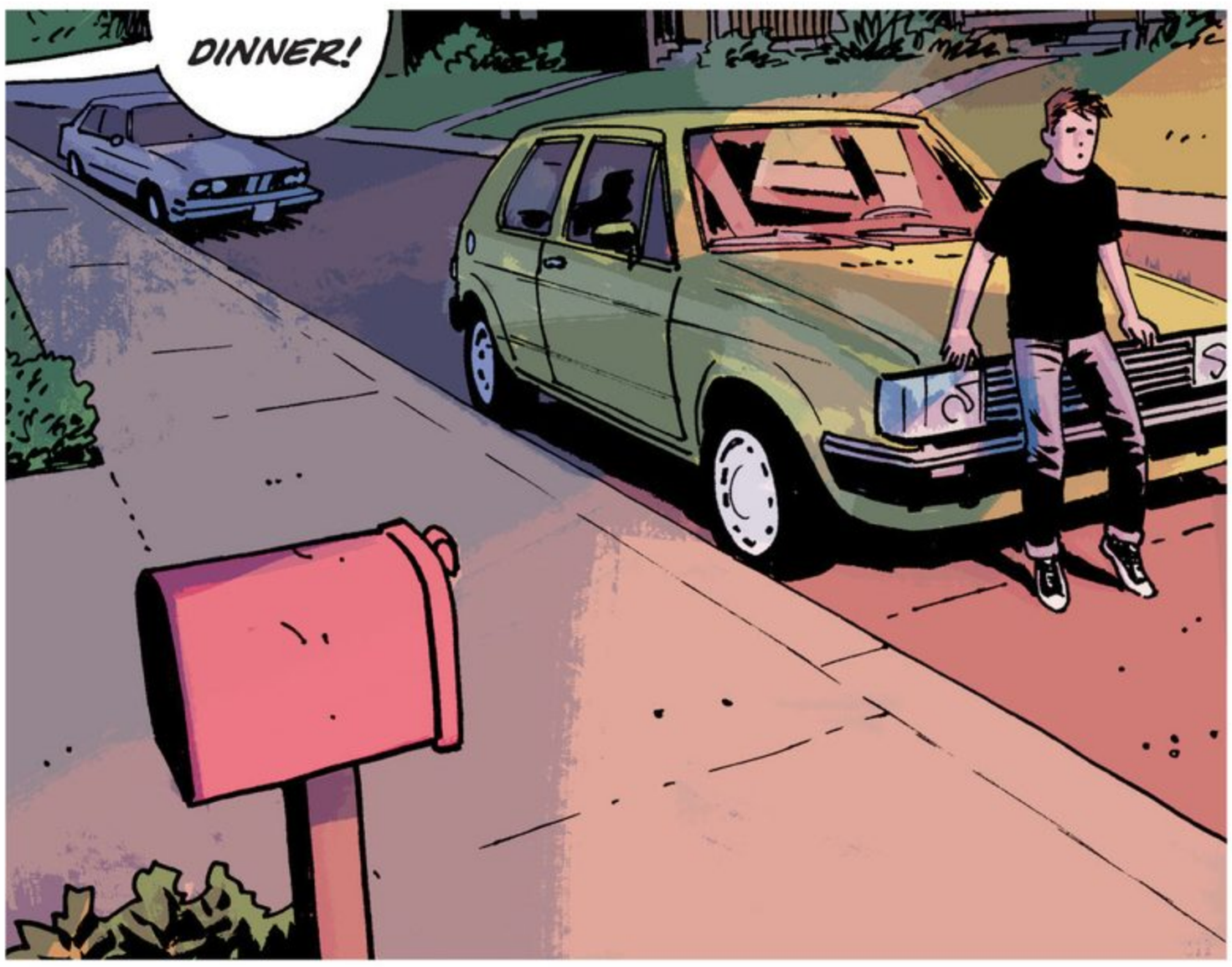
But it didn't matter anymore.

That hope just kept growing inside of him...

Until it felt like a magnet, pulling him to her.

Five Days Later





THREE WEEKS...

YOU PUT IN *MAIL FORWARDING?*

I DON'T KNOW.

BECAUSE I STILL GOT *NOTHIN'*, KID.

SORRY.

Ricky was waiting for a letter from his older brother, Tracy.

A year ago they'd been busted stealing a Mercedes... And since Tracy was 18, the judge had given him a choice of ***prison*** or the ***Army***.

So while Ricky was in juvie, Tracy was in ***Basic Training***.

And then off in some camp back East learning to be a ***paratrooper*** or something like that.

He came home for a few days before shipping out... But the whole visit had been weird.

Tracy with his **buzz cut**, barely talking.

And **Dad** treating him like some kind of narc.

LOOK, JUST TRY TO PUT UP WITH HIM FOR TWO MORE *YEARS*...

THEN YOU'LL BE FREE.

YEAH... SURE.

I'LL WRITE YOU WHEN I *CAN*, OKAY?

CHECKED

But that was months ago and Ricky was still waiting for a letter to arrive.

Sometimes he wondered if Tracy was on a secret mission somewhere and not allowed to contact anyone.

Other times he wondered if Tracy had finally gotten what he always ***wanted***, an escape from their family...

And he couldn't look back now, even to write a letter home.

HEY DAD, DID YOU PUT IN THE ***CHANGE OF ADDRESS*** THING AT THE POST OFFICE?

WHAT? YEAH... I THINK.

YOU DID... OR YOU THINK YOU DID?

I DON'T KNOW.

LOOK, GET IN HERE...

WE GOTTA ***TALK*** TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING.

... ***WE?***

And just like that, Ricky feels the ground starting to shift under him again...

He should have seen it coming. Should have felt the silence around the house the past few days...

But he hadn't.

He'd been too distracted by Jane... By the fact that they had killed someone together.

He thought it ***meant*** something... That she understood him.

That they had a connection.

But no... Here she and Dad were, telling him their ***new plan***...

How after their job this weekend, they're leaving town for three or four months...

And ***he's*** going to live with Leo and his father.

They have the details all worked out, they say.

And Ricky's actually surprised how much it hurts, as his dad just nods along...

While Jane makes it sound like they're doing him a favor... Instead of abandoning him.

THIS IS *BULLSHIT!*

YOU'RE LETTING *HER* MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT *OUR FAMILY* NOW?!

THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M -

FUCK YOU!

YOU'RE NOT EVEN *PART OF THIS!*

DON'T YOU TALK TO HER *LIKE THAT!*

FUCK *YOU,* TOO!

YOU'RE *PATHETIC!*

YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE HOW FUCKING *PUSSY-WHIPPED* SHE'S GOT -

KRAAK

TEEG - *NO!!*

Ricky's so angry he doesn't even feel the beating this time.
LITTLE PIECE OF SHIT!

FUCK YOU!

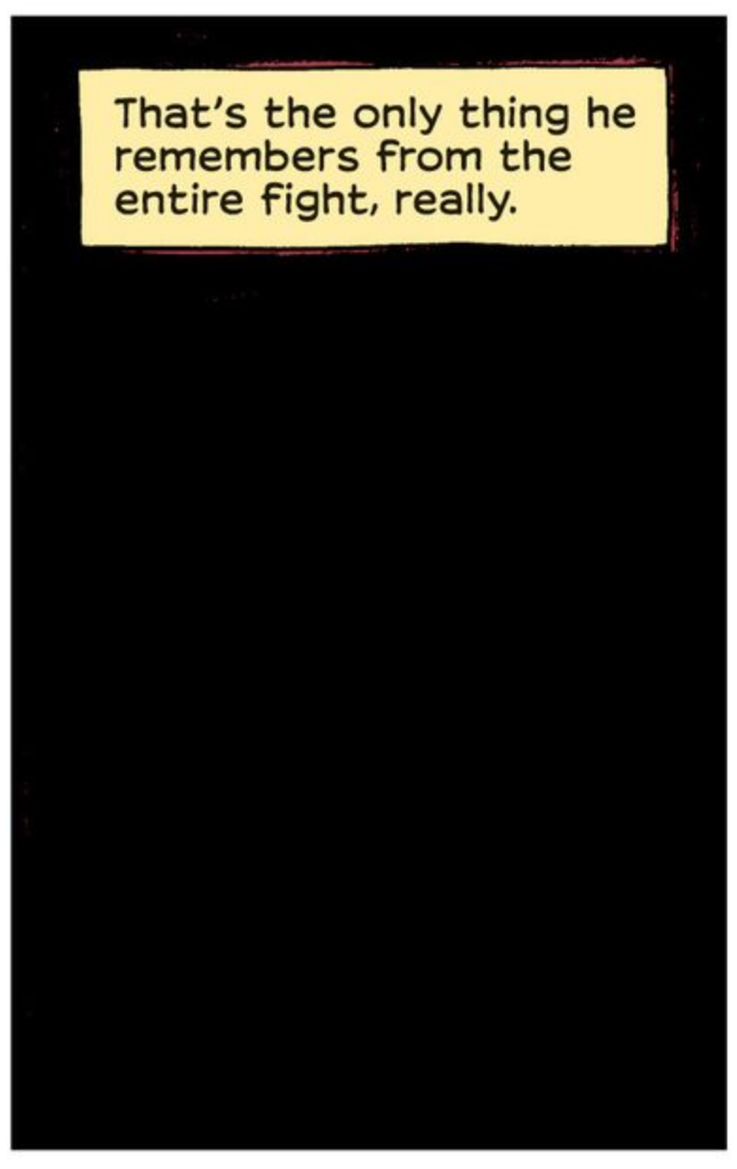
The only thing he feels is his own fist...
TEEG! STOP IT!

Hitting his father...

I HATE YOU!

Hitting back.

YOU MOTHERFUCKER!


That's the only thing he remembers from the entire fight, really.

STOP MOVING.

IT HURTS.
TOUGH SHIT.

WHY ARE YOU WITH HIM? WHY HIM?

AND WHO SHOULD I BE WITH INSTEAD?

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.

MM HMMM.

OKAY, THAT SHOULD DO IT.

TRY NOT TO GET HIT IN THE *FACE* AGAIN FOR A WHILE.

WHY ARE YOU BEING *SO MEAN* TO ME?

I'M *NOT*, KID...

I LIKE YOU.

YOU'RE JUST NOT PART OF THE *PLAN*.

Fuck *her*.

And fuck *Dad*, too.

That's what he's thinking later, when he's hotwiring the next-door neighbor's car...

Practically *begging* to get caught.

But he doesn't.

He's not even sure where he's going at first...

But then he's back in his old neighborhood...

At their old house.

And just like he figured...

His dad had ***not*** put in the change-of-address form.

But there were just ***bills*** and ***past due notices*** here...

Nothing from his brother...

FINAL NOTICE

Nothing for Ricky.

HEY!

HEY KID...

WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN THAT HOUSE?

WHAT DO YOU CARE? IT'S ABANDONED.

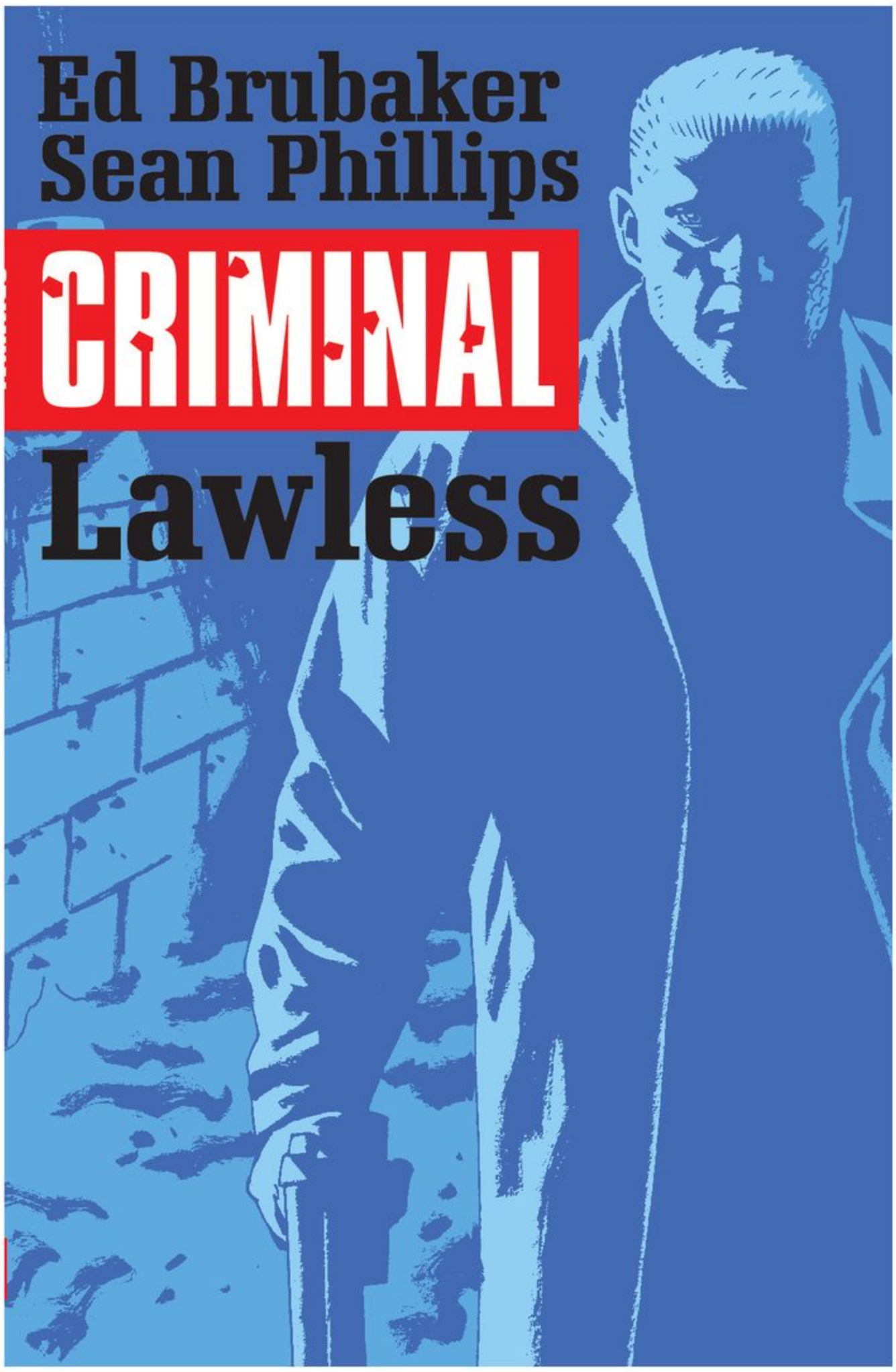
DO YOU KNOW THE PEOPLE WHO USED TO LIVE THERE?

YEAH... WHY?

To Be Continued

Okay, it's all coming together now, and there's only two chapters left. Next issue is the big heist, which I have intentionally kept secret from you so far. But I have been dying to get to it.

I hope everyone enjoyed the brief glimpse of Tracy Lawless. A lot of you have written in asking if he'd be in this story and where he was, and now you know. This is just a few months after the last time Tracy came home, before he spent a lot of years away in the military. To see what happened to him next, check out CRIMINAL vol 2: LAWLESS.



The Secret Ingredient is Crime

In between issues, we won two RINGO AWARDS. Best Graphic Novel for MY HEROES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN JUNKIES and Sean won for Best Artist. So congrats to us and to everyone else who won or was nominated.

We really loved doing that original graphic novel last year, and have plans to do more of them in the future. I'll have more news on that soon, as we finalize our schedule for the next year.

***

Before I move on to other stuff, I want to say something important. A message for a frie – I mean, an ex-friend.

Recently I've been catching up on some comics reading, and the other night I stayed up to read the last five or six issues of SAGA (I heard it's coming back soon so I wanted to catch up first). Anyway, I somehow managed to avoid all spoilers since the last issue came out, so I just want to say to Brian K Vaughan, if you're reading – You're a bastard. And I hate you.

Also, I'm really glad I waited to read it, because the wait for the next issue is going to suck now. But in closing, screw you, Brian.

***

Okay, so what else have I been up to?

Most of my days the last few weeks have been spent on writing or reading or research, or thinking about what I should be writing, reading, or researching.

My current work schedule begins early, whenever I wake up - anywhere from 5 to 6AM. I make some coffee and wake up looking at the computer, answering emails from the day before (I generally stop looking at the

computer even to check email, around 4:30 or 5PM every day, because I've found it healthier to be checked out).

Then I start either notebooking, or trying to write script. Sometimes I need to watch a movie or TV pilot or read for a while, for research, but I don't totally count that as "work" even though it's something I need to do to be able to write sometimes. So even on days where I spent most of the time reading or watching stuff or just thinking - all important parts of the process, especially the thinking - I still try to at least write some pages in my notebook, so I have the feeling of progress. And that incremental progress is how I work. Just slowly, page by page - anywhere from 2 to 4 pages a day, if I'm writing comics scripts - building the story. I always have an outline that I notebooked, but even with that guideline I don't always find the right flow from scene-to-scene until I'm deep into the script.

Sometimes I think I know the ending, but the scene right before it doesn't want to work, won't lead to it the way I wanted, and I have to go for a walk and mull things over for a while... Sometimes I'm stuck like that for days, honestly, until I see the way to make it all work. And sometimes the solution is so simple that it's just deleting a panel or a sentence or getting rid of the narrative and letting the characters just talk more... For me, a lot of writing is about the pace, not of the plot (or not just the plot) but of the language on the pages. The silent panels, the dialog, the space between captions in a full tier panel. If the rhythm of all that doesn't flow right, it will drive me crazy.

Currently I'm juggling three things - CRIMINAL scripts, an unannounced comic project with another favorite artist of mine, and a TV pilot that I also can't talk about yet. I used to be better at juggling things than I am now, so it's been a bit difficult, but I'm really happy about all three of these. All of them are exactly what I want to be writing right now. That hasn't always been the case.

***

Okay, let's answer a letter if we have room… This one is from Ryan Clark:

I fell down a bit of a **CRIMINAL** *rabbit hole the other night. It started with #8-9 of the current series, went into the* **Bad Weekend** *GN, and culminated with the magazine variants of the specials (mainly because Ricky Lawless made a Zangar reference). It got me curious about the timeline though, and I was wondering what the most current point in the overall story is. I have a feeling it's* **My Heroes Have Always Been Junkies**, *but it could be* **The Sinners** *due to the death of* [redacted]

Yeah, Junkies takes place in like 2016 or so, and The Sinners takes place in 2007. The guy she mentions on the phone in Junkies isn't the same guy that you're thinking of. It's his son.

I started putting dates in the books when we started setting them in the past more often, but the first two books are set around the time they were published. We may add dates to new editions of the early books at some point, now that so much time has passed. I've said it a million times, but the books can really be read in any order, although I'm not sure anyone has ever tried reading them in the order the stories take place.

Write in and say, if anyone out here has done that and if it added anything to the experience.

***

In our back pages this month, our friend Kim Morgan writes about Felix E. Feist's The Threat, proving once again that she has seen a lot of movies I have never even heard of. And Sean knocks the illustrations out of the park, as usual.

***

Okay, that's it for this issue. Send in any questions and comments to: criminalcomic@gmail.com and we'll see you the week of Christmas with our next issue, the big heist… That's the cover on the next page.

The Threat

by
Kim Morgan
illustrated by
Sean Phillips

"When I accepted the assignment to take over **Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.**, *Marvel Comics' four-color 007 facsimile, the series was shambling through creative purgatory, charted by a knot of writers and artists who (with the exception of Jack Kirby) apparently didn't know or didn't care about its direction—or, more appropriately, its lack of direction… I might have used Charles Bronson, Kirk Douglas, James Coburn, or other cinematic tough-guys upon which to build my matrix, but instead opted for one of my favorite character actors: Charles McGraw. Whether playing heroes or villains, he was always as hard-boiled as they came, always just as ready to shut anyone up with a backhand slap as with a warning. His vocal delivery neatly summed up everything he brought to the screen: a predatory growl as harrowing as that of a cornered tiger's, bristling with menace, and suggesting a penchant for violence beyond that of his blunt, granite features. Sometimes there was even a harsh, metallic quality in his timbre, like that of a Sonovox voice amplifier. Something beyond human. Perhaps something even less than human. The voice of Charles McGraw personified what I felt Fury was all about. His was the voice I heard as I wrote him into the S.H.I.E.L.D. saga. His voice was the core of the character, the point at which every adventure began and ended.." – Jim Steranko, from his intro to Alan K. Rode's "Charles McGraw: Biography of a Film Noir Tough Guy"*

In Felix E. Feist's *The Threat*, Charles McGraw's Red sits in a chair in a California desert shack – he's leaning back. His feet are propped up on another chair – indifferent to the cast of characters freaking out around him – hot-placid amidst chaos. His sweaty partners in crime (Anthony Caruso's Nick and Frank Richards' Lefty) are pacing uncomfortably, wishing the beer wasn't so warm ("Hot or cold it's still beer!" Nick snarls to Lefty's whining). They keep on the lookout. The tied-up men in the back – police detective Ray Williams (Michael O'Shea) and district attorney, Barker MacDonald (Frank Conroy) responsible for Red's prior incarceration (Red busted out) – are strategizing and scared – and they look completely useless. *What on earth are these straight-arrow fellas gonna do? What are they capable of – up against Red? Let's see them try. Will they try?*

The traumatized ex-girlfriend, Carol, who was forced along this dire road trip (Virginia Grey), the one who never ratted Red out and keeps telling him so – *she* is trying to keep her shit together and we feel for this poor soul. Red doesn't believe her or the cops, and this slip of a woman (she is pretty, very distinct looking, but so thin she looks almost like she's going to pass out), endures, vulnerable as all hell, but somehow stronger than the authority figures wiggling in the further room. She has a past with this man – you'd have to be vulnerable and strong to have a past with Red. And we'll see more of that later.

The force of Red is so intense, so nearly unmoving, that everyone around him looks like mice, circling an enormous cat – one who will casually swipe his paw and lay any one of them flat, maybe even dead. He's ready to strike and yet totally relaxed, if that's possible in a human. With McGraw it is. He doesn't look comfortable necessarily, that's not the right word, he doesn't look like he's enjoying himself either – he looks angry, but not out of control (just born pissed or something) – but he looks in his element, as if this was just what he was naturally meant to be and do. Like he almost can't help himself.

At this point, no one seems like they could take him (no one ever does, not really, until the end … keep your eye on skinny Carol) and all he really has against him is that old standby – time. So, when one of his partners claims that Red said they'd be out of there by daylight (it's past daylight – and they're worried and itching to exit this hell hole) the other asks for the time. Red rasps, "Give me your watch." Nick takes his watch off and hands it to Red. Red puts the watch on the table, grabs a beer bottle, and smashes it. He chucks it back to Nick and says with his distinct growl: "Now you don't have to worry about the time."

Well, indeed no.

This is a perfect Charles McGraw moment and one where you think – no other actor in the world would deliver that line the way he does. Even that simple of a line. None. Not even Lawrence Tierney, who never seemed like he was acting either (Tierney, as tough as he was, often appeared cornered – there was murderous desperation in his eyes). There is just something about this man's voice and demeanor that is unmatched and reverberates through a room. Alan K. Rode, who wrote the ultimate biography on McGraw, summed it up beautifully in his book:

"His guttural rasp of a voice, reminiscent of broken china plates grating around in a burlap sack, was complemented by an intimidating, laser-like glare and a taciturn demeanor that verged on being closed captioned for the hearing impaired. McGraw's brusque noir characterizations are comparable in technique to Thelonious Monk's splayed fingers beating his unique jazz stylings into submission on the piano ivories. The title of Monk's identifying theme 'Straight, No Chaser' exemplified McGraw's artistic and personal bent for over half a century."

In *The Threat* (1949), Feist's lean and mean story is told without an ounce of flab, filled out by the presence of the electrifying McGraw. The story is simple: Red busts out of Folsom Prison – we see this briefly at the very beginning – guys running, guns firing, sirens blaring, but we don't need to see much else. The movie gets right to it. He's on the run, and hell bent to get the guys who put him behind bars – that's the District Attorney and the police detective we saw in the aforementioned shack (one will get such bad treatment off screen, we hear his torment and truly wonder what on earth is being done to the guy – it's more terrifying that we only hear his pained moans). They nab these two, nab sad Carol, nab a poor guy who has nothing to do with any of this, a guy named Joe (Don McGuire), and head out to the California desert hide-out, waiting for Red's old partner to smuggle him into Mexico.

So, what's going to happen? I'm not going to say because the joy in this movie is wondering how on

earth anyone is going to get out of this place alive. And how are they going to take on McGraw? You wonder about the body count. You worry about Carol and you are riveted by Red. You can't take your eyes off of him.

And so we watch – we watch the room rumble with McGraw's blood, his pumping black heart bouncing off those hate-shack walls. He's casually savage, and for a moment, we might think he's got something going on inside there – so if he briefly stares forlornly into the void, we look for some kind of feeling – and then wonder if he's merely staring into a sociopathic abyss. McGraw's Red, a furnace of vengeance, is boiling his captives' lives away by simply breathing near them. But, really, he's boiling his own life away too – absolutely self-destructing. But he's doing it *his* way. We guess. We wonder if this guy ever feels joy. He doesn't seem too sad.

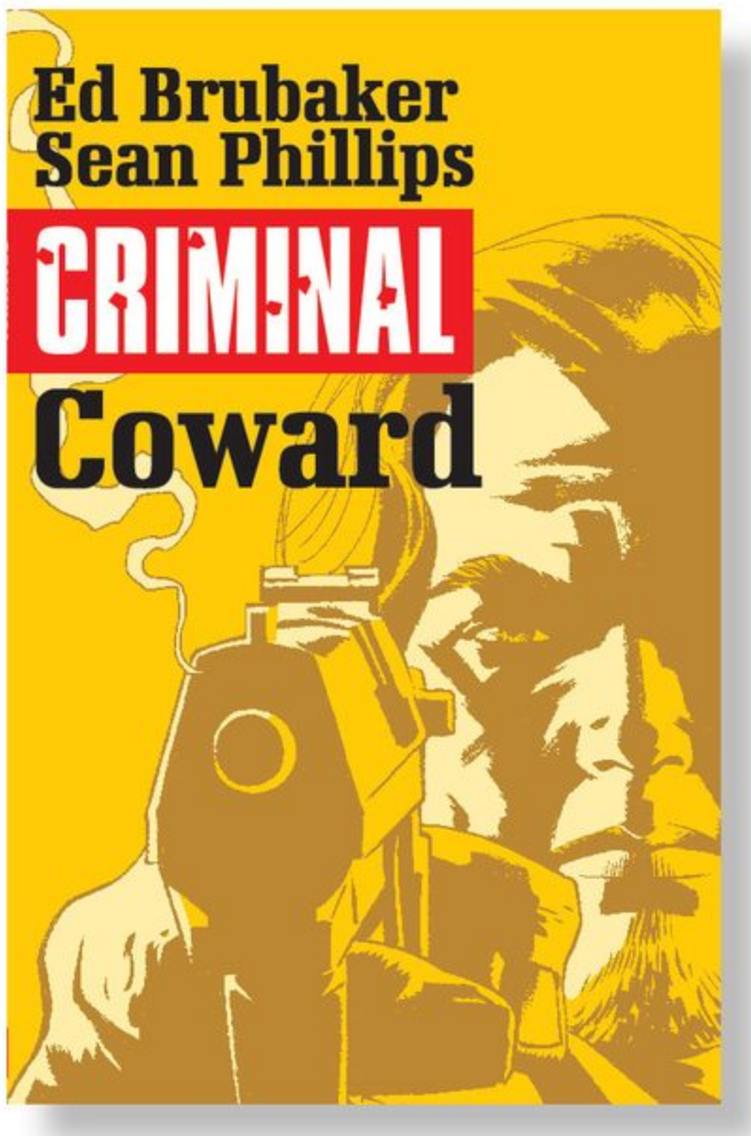
Everyone's good-to-great here (Gray is a standout as are McGraw's sleazy cronies) but it's McGraw's gruesome party all the way, from his silent menace to his terrifying bursts of violence (like pinning a man's wrists with his feet and crushing his head with a chair – one of the greatest scenes in the movie, emotionally *and* technically – and it was probably that same chair Red was reclining in) he is like nothing you've ever seen, and probably never will again.

This is the movie that made McGraw something of a star – thought not a usual leading man – notably in Richard Fleischer's *Armored Car Robbery* (1950) and *The Narrow Margin* (1952). And he did sometimes play a good guy – a tough guy but a good guy. He's also terrific in Harold D. Schuster's *Loophole*, Howard Daniels' *Roadblock*, John Farrow and Richard Fleischer's *His Kind of Woman* and of course, Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus*.

Feist (who directed two other hellraisers – Lawrence Tierney in the tough, excellent *The Devil Thumbs a Ride*, and Steve Cochran in the rough and romantic *Tomorrow is Another Day*) working with cinematographer Harry J. Wild, knows how to showcase McGraw in such doomed digs. Tension builds so much that you can practically smell the sweat – and everyone's sweat is a little different – you can smell that too. These characters perspire and dread and plan and panic and grow crazier and crazier while their big bad captor sits and waits, radiating wrath.

And all in just 66 minutes. That is six minutes over an hour for those who are bad at math. And during that time, this hysterical entrapment does not waste one minute of intensity, style, intelligence and Charlie McGraw-magnitude. Feist knew what he was doing and who he was dealing with here. He knew who was the star, even though McGraw is third billed!

And the movie needn't be shorter or longer. As if you were concerned about the time. Were you concerned about the time? Smash! "Now you don't have to worry about the time."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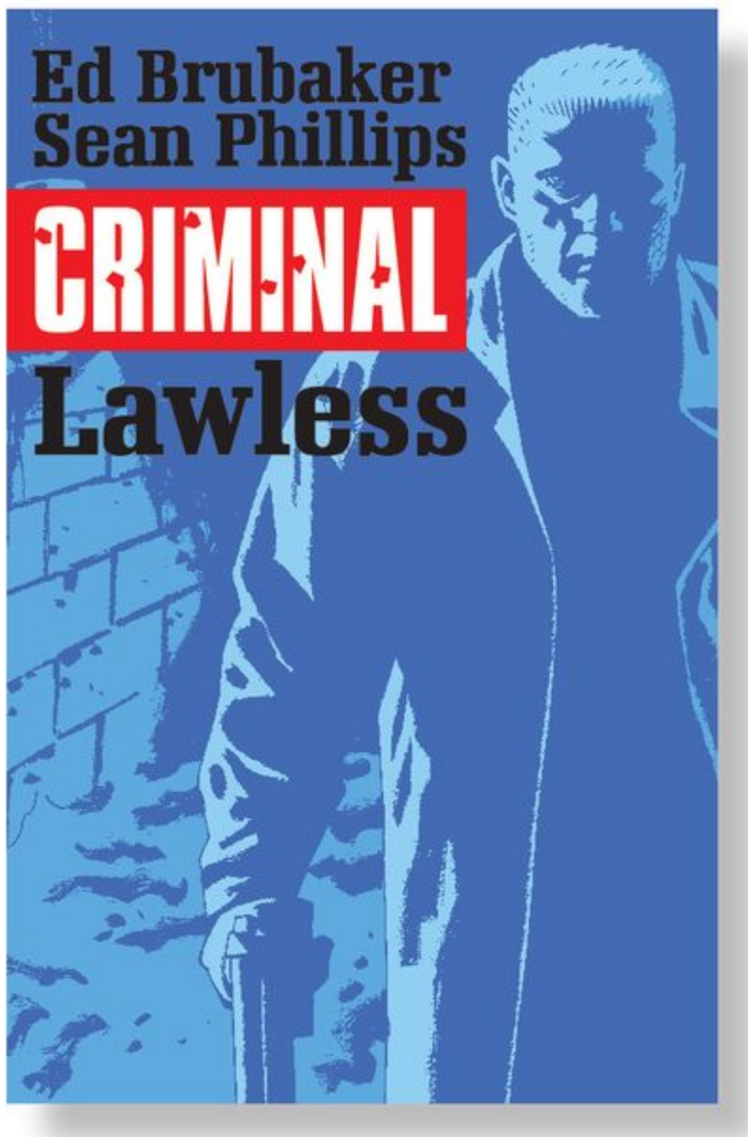
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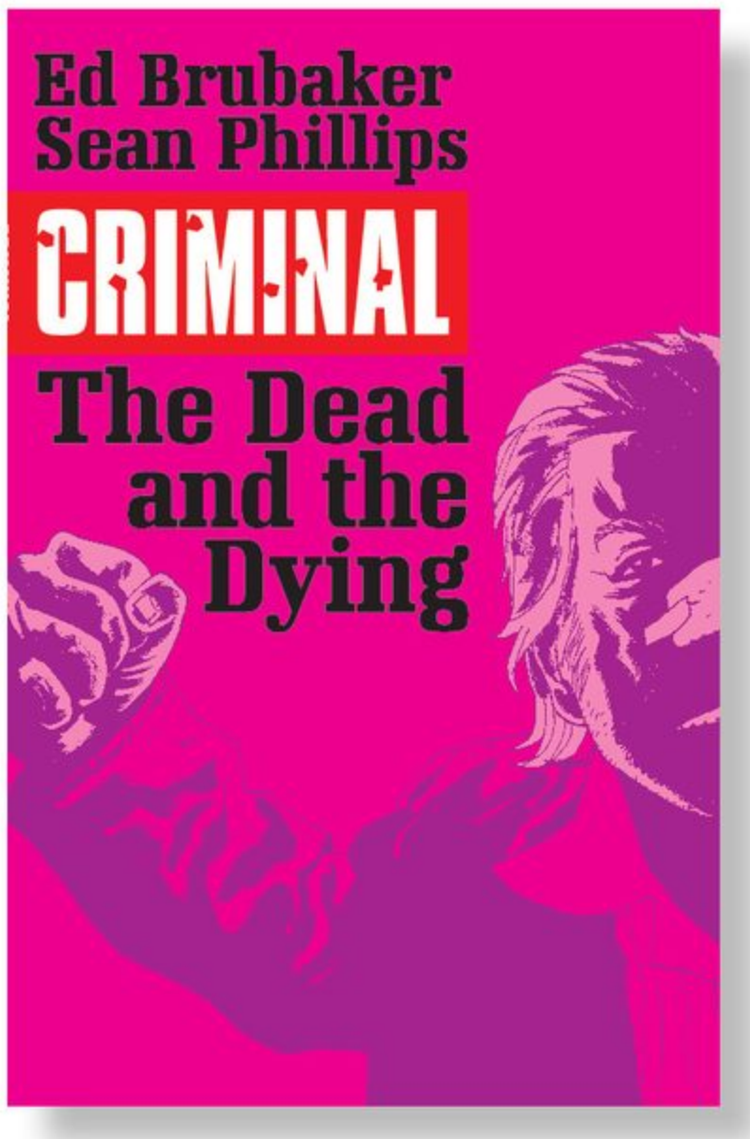
Lawless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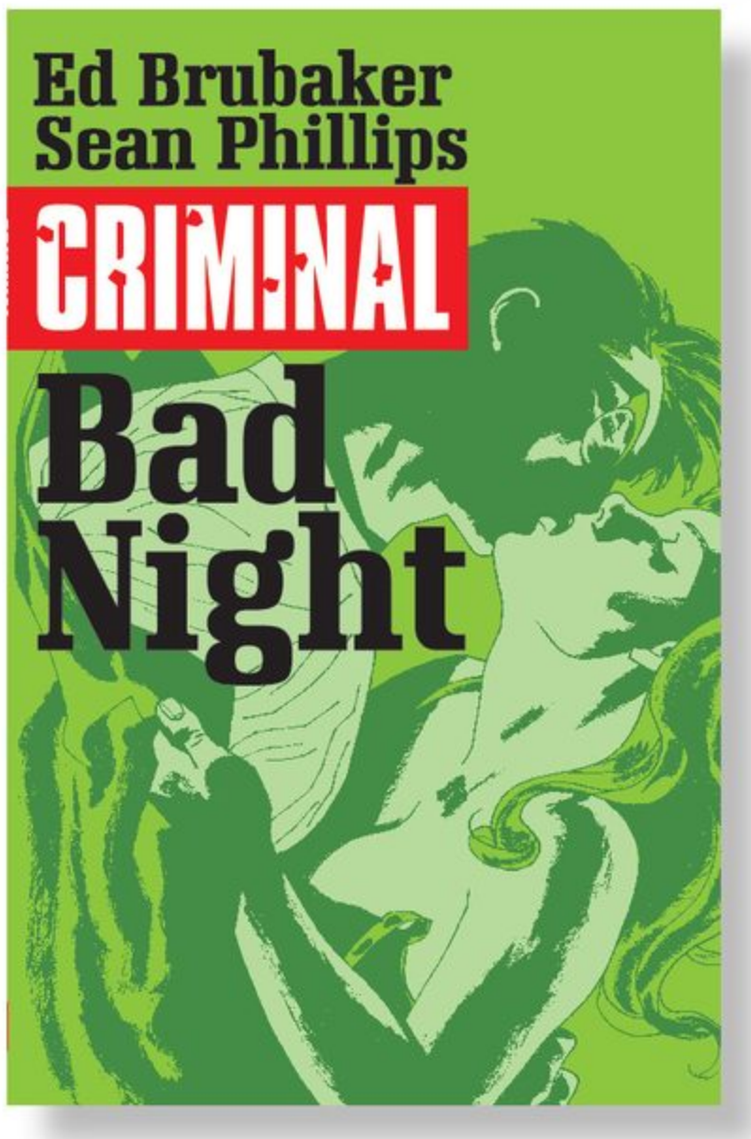
The Dead and the Dying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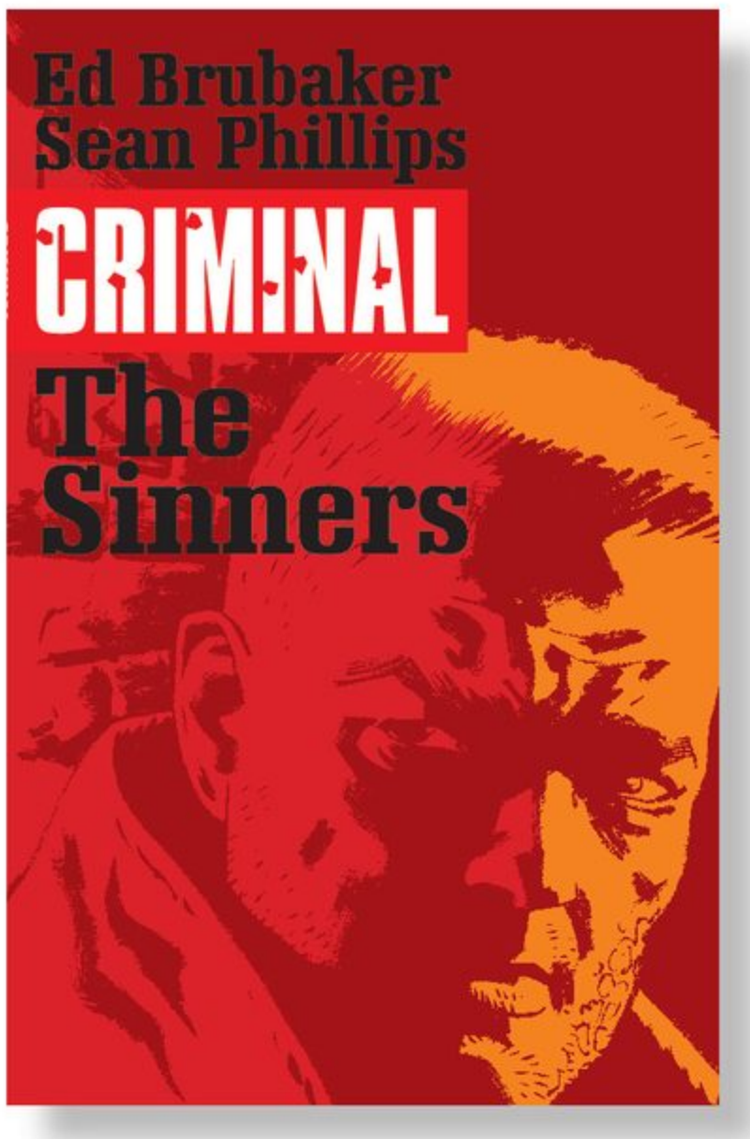
Bad Night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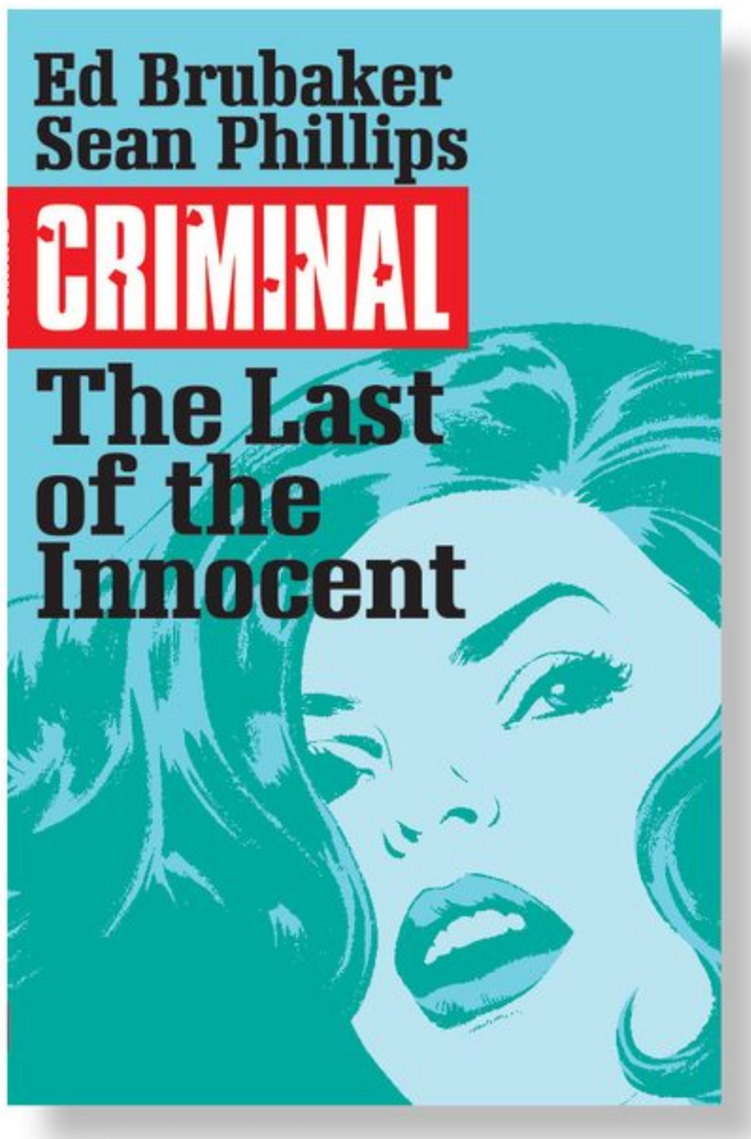
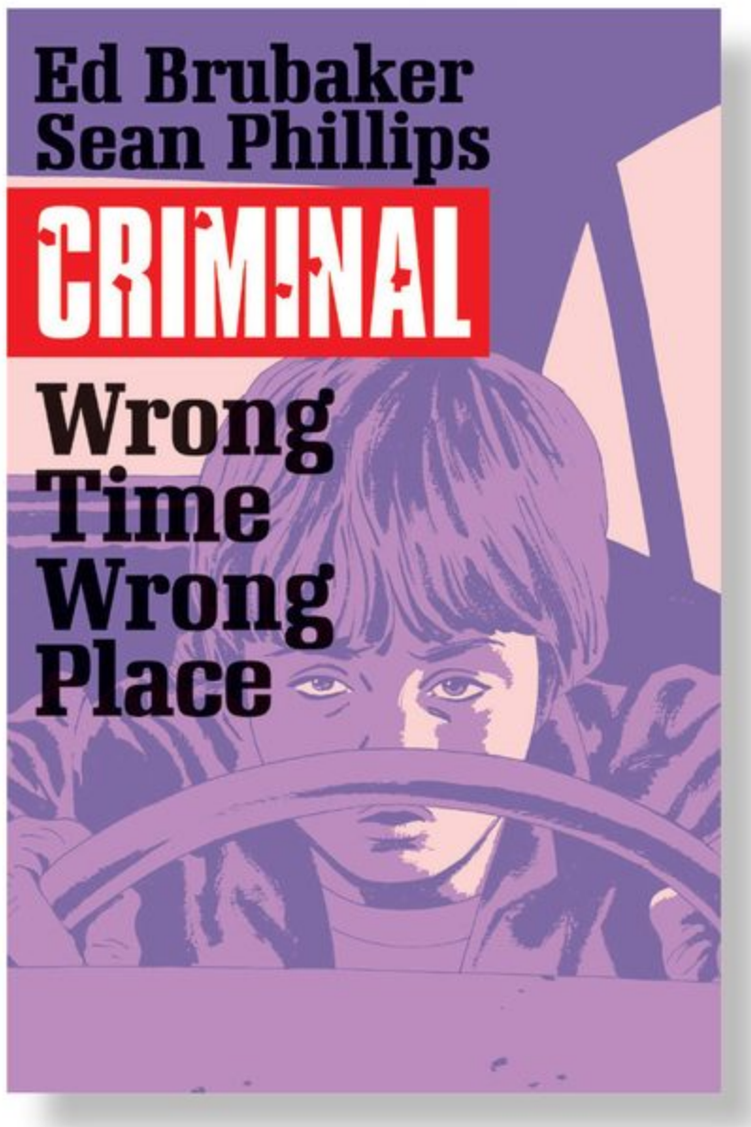
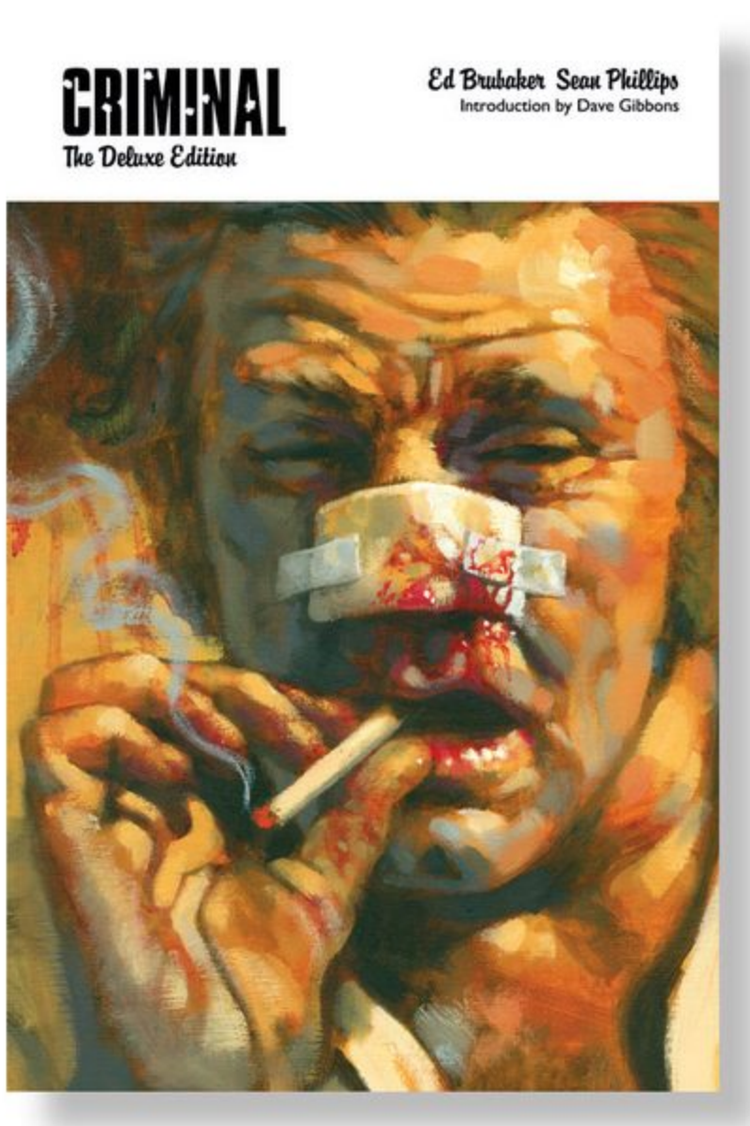
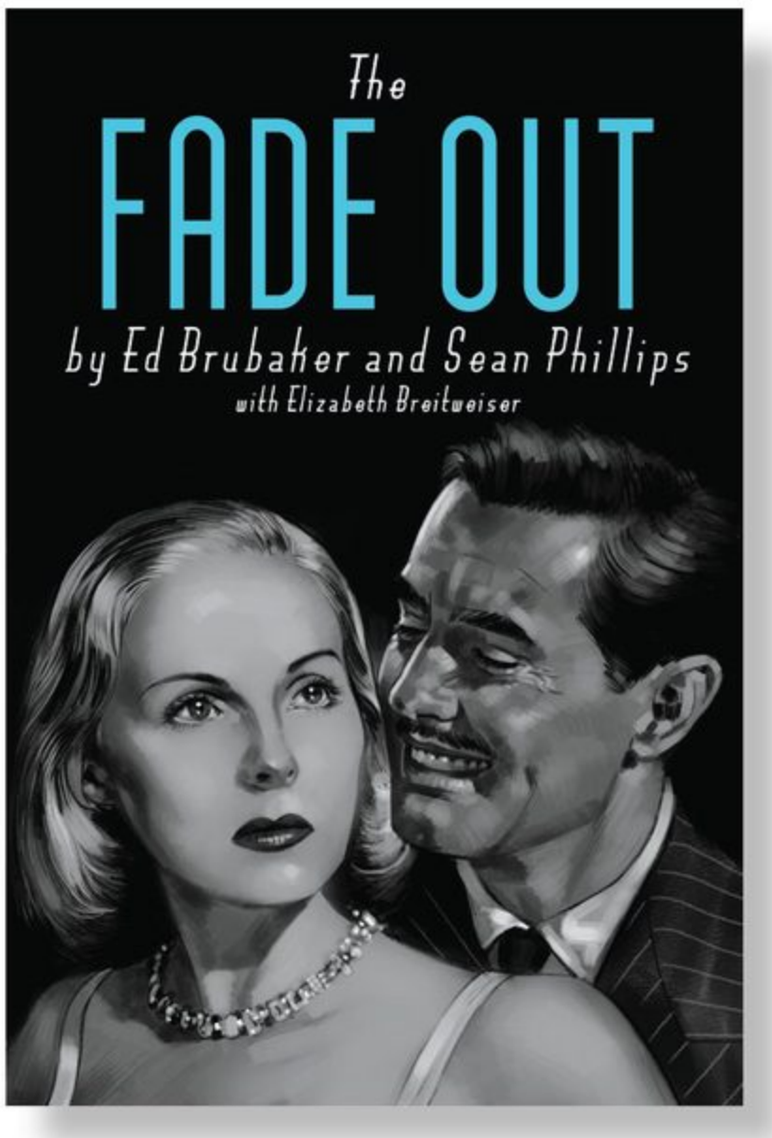
CRIMINAL
The Sinners


Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips
CRIMINAL
The Last of the Innocent

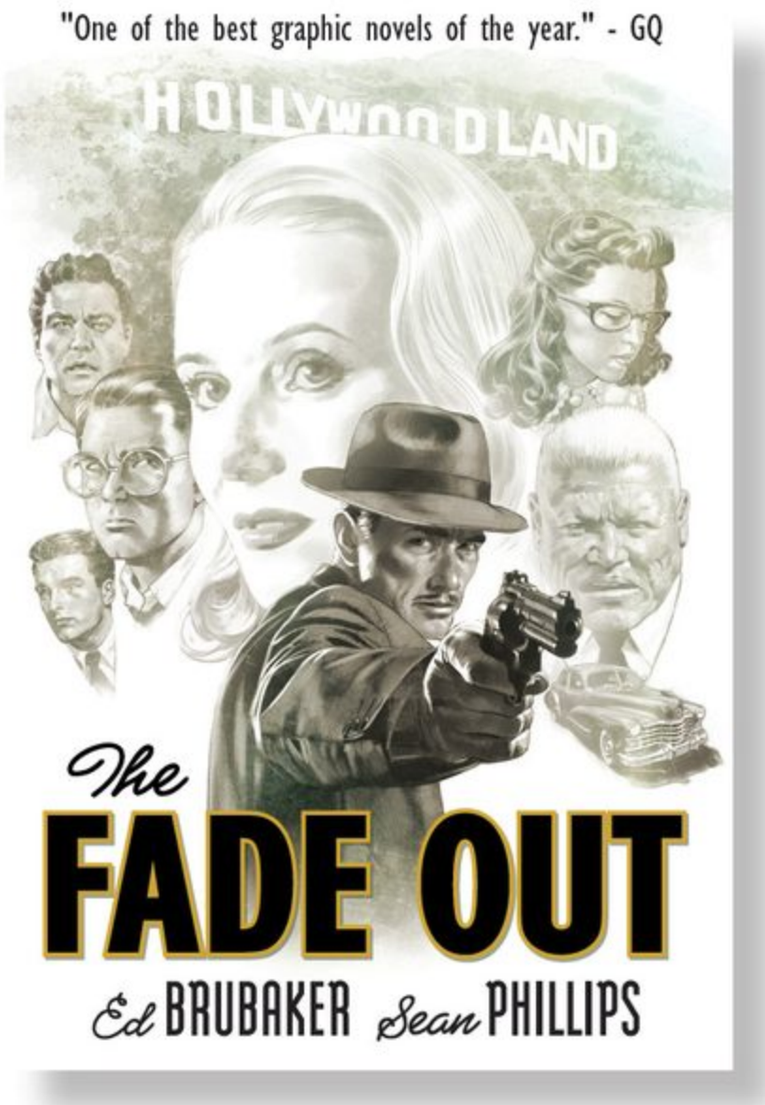

Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips
CRIMINAL
Wrong Time Wrong Place


CRIMINAL
The Deluxe Edition
Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips
Introduction by Dave Gibbons

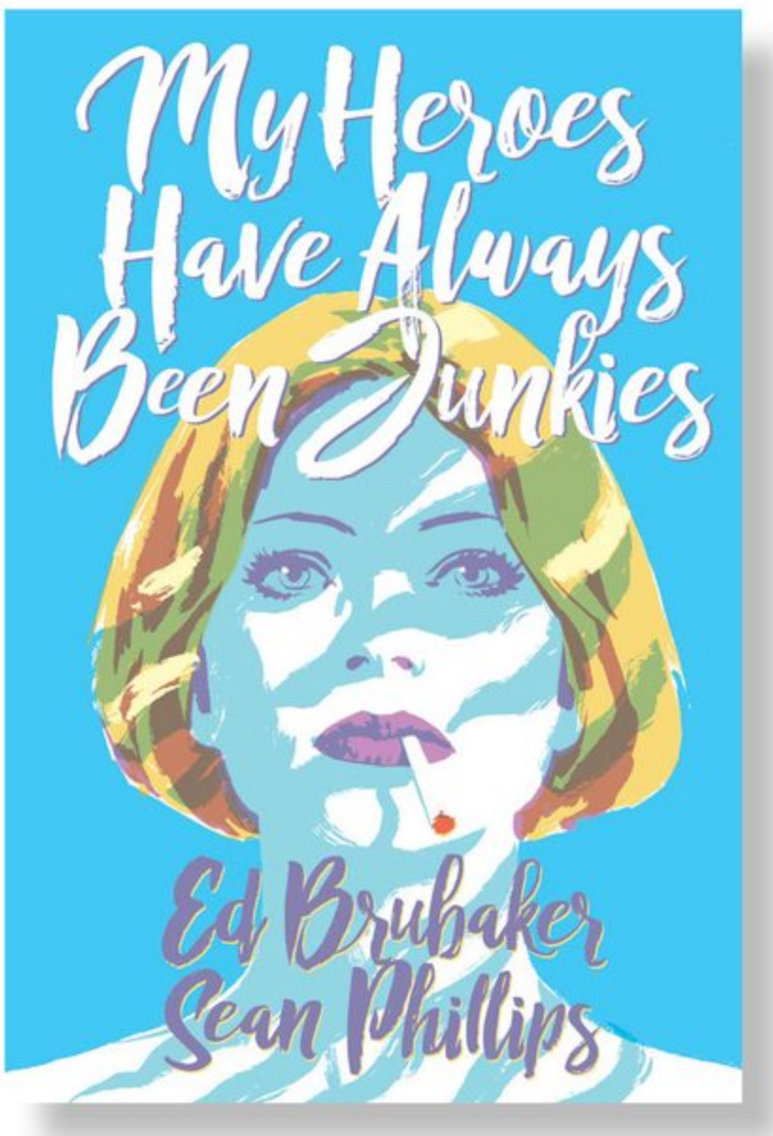
CRIMINAL
The Deluxe Edition Volume Two
Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips



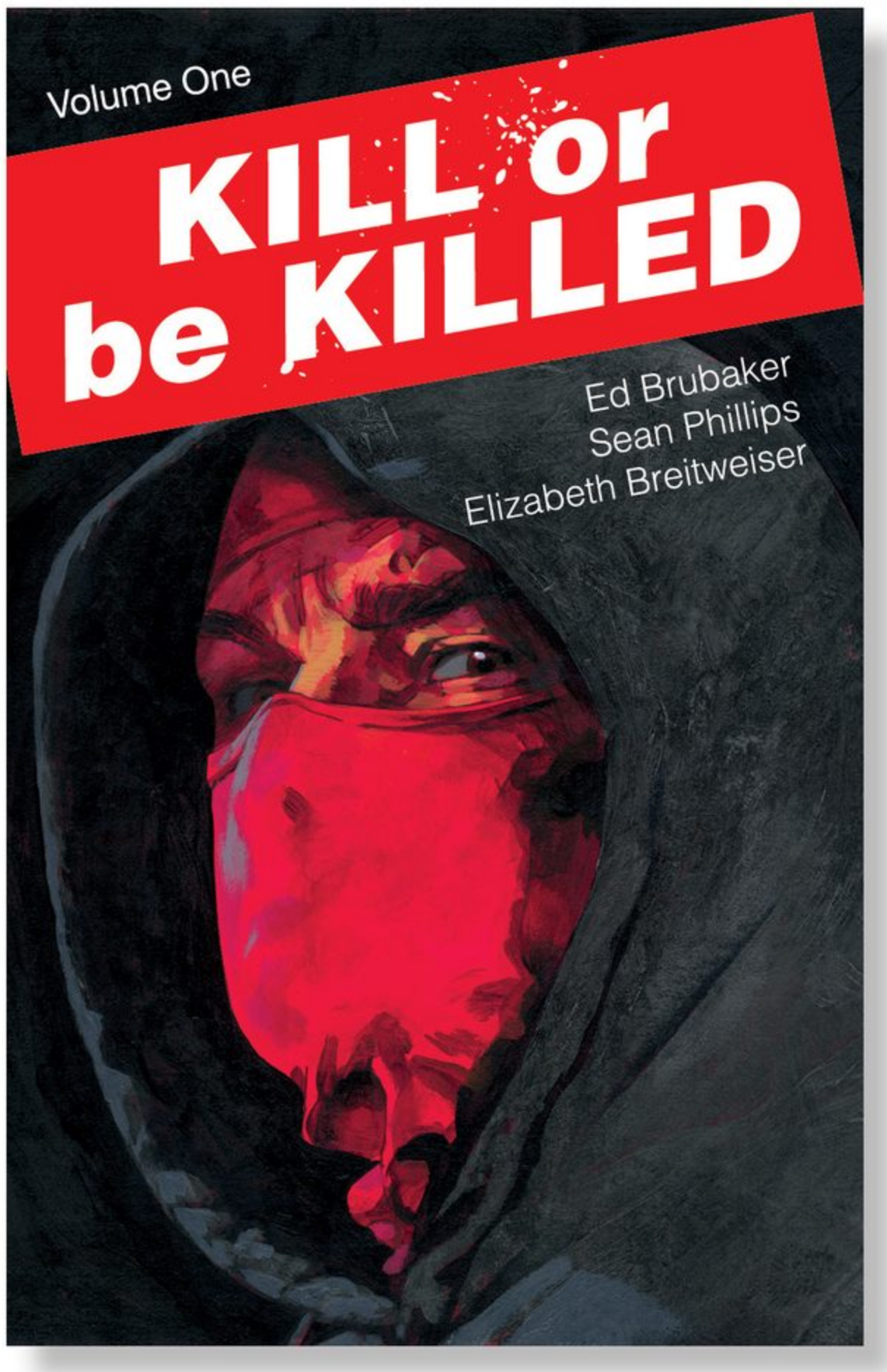
"CRIMINAL is equal parts John Woo's THE KILLER, Stanley Kubrick's THE KILLING, and Francis Ford Coppola's THE GODFATHER."
—Playboy Magazine

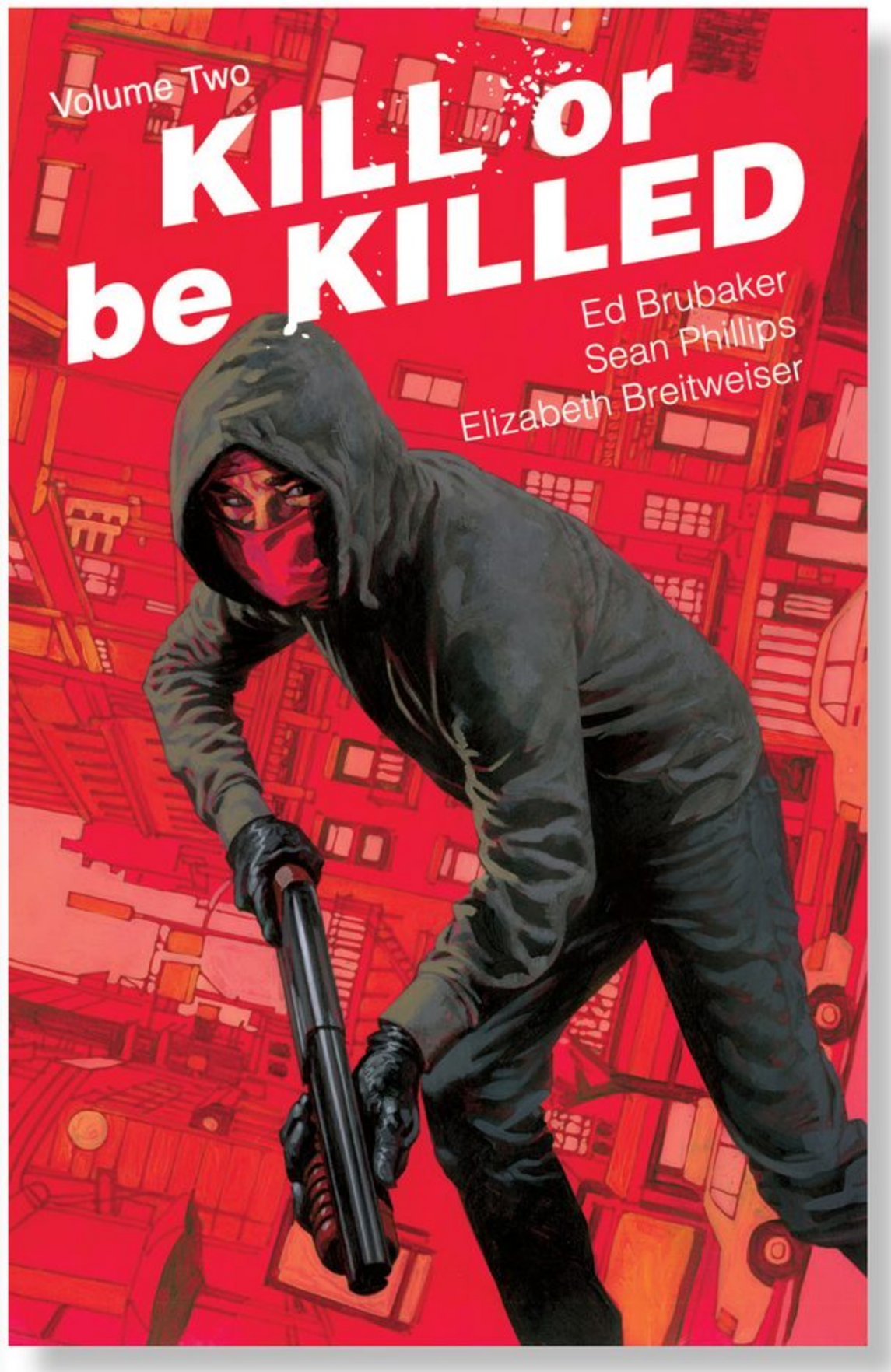


"One of comics dream teams delivers their best story yet in THE FADE OUT, an old Hollywood murder mystery draped against HUAC and the Red Scare."
—New York Magazine



Newsweek's Best Comic Books of 2018
Thrillist's Best Comics & Graphic Novels of 2018
Eisner Winner – Best Original Graphic Novel


Volume One
KILL or be KILLED
Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips
Elizabeth Breitweiser


Volume Two
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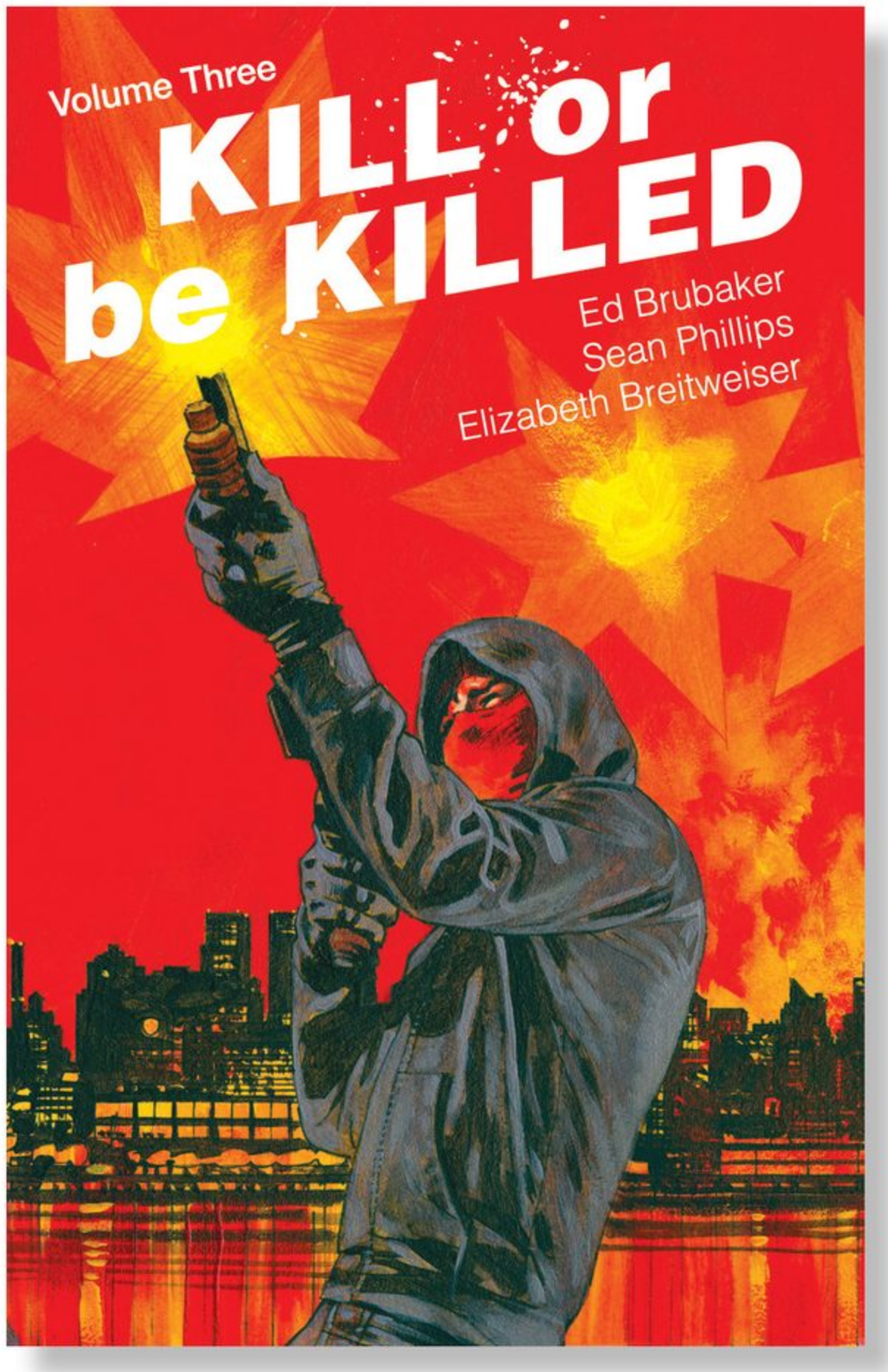
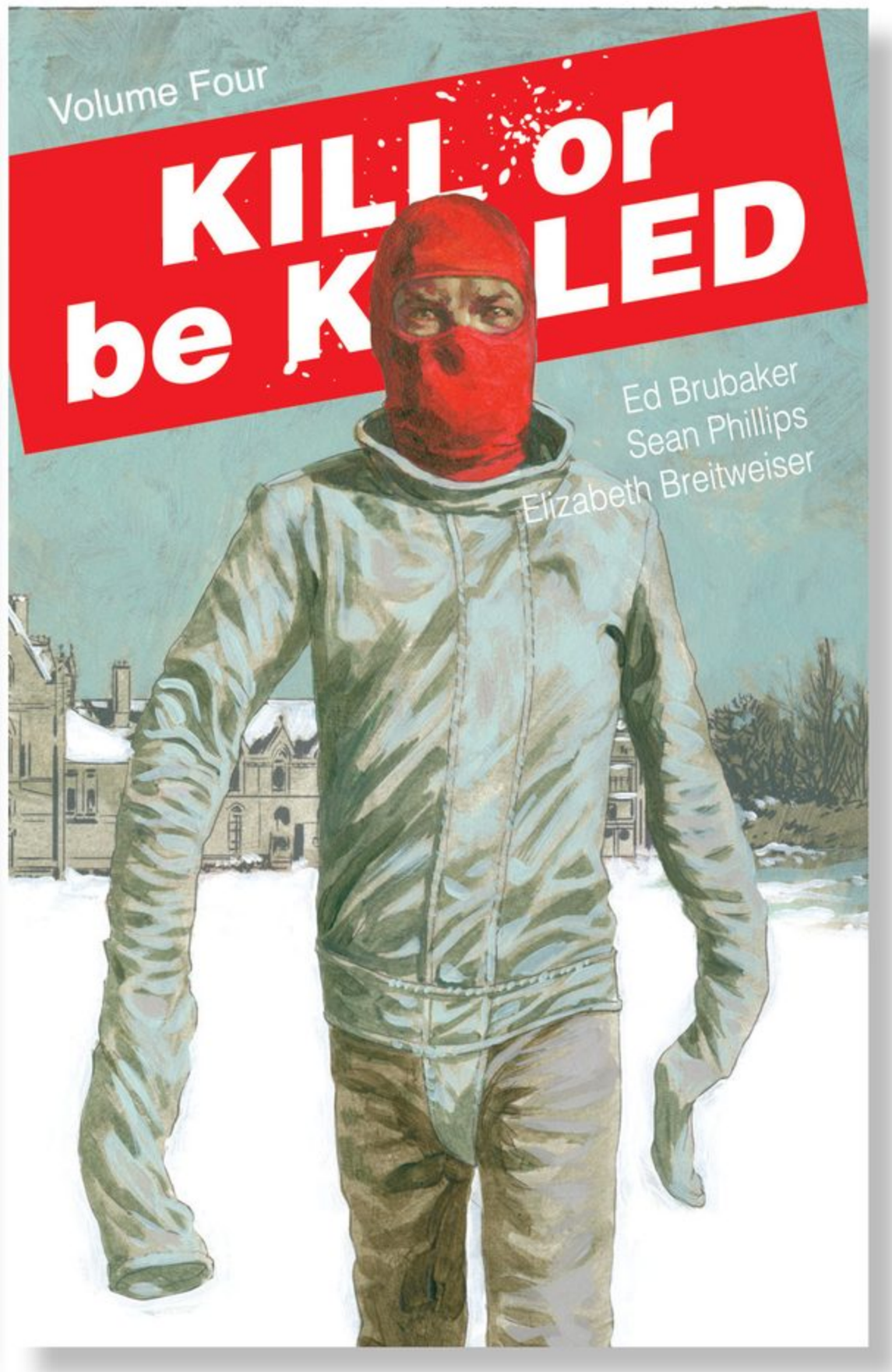
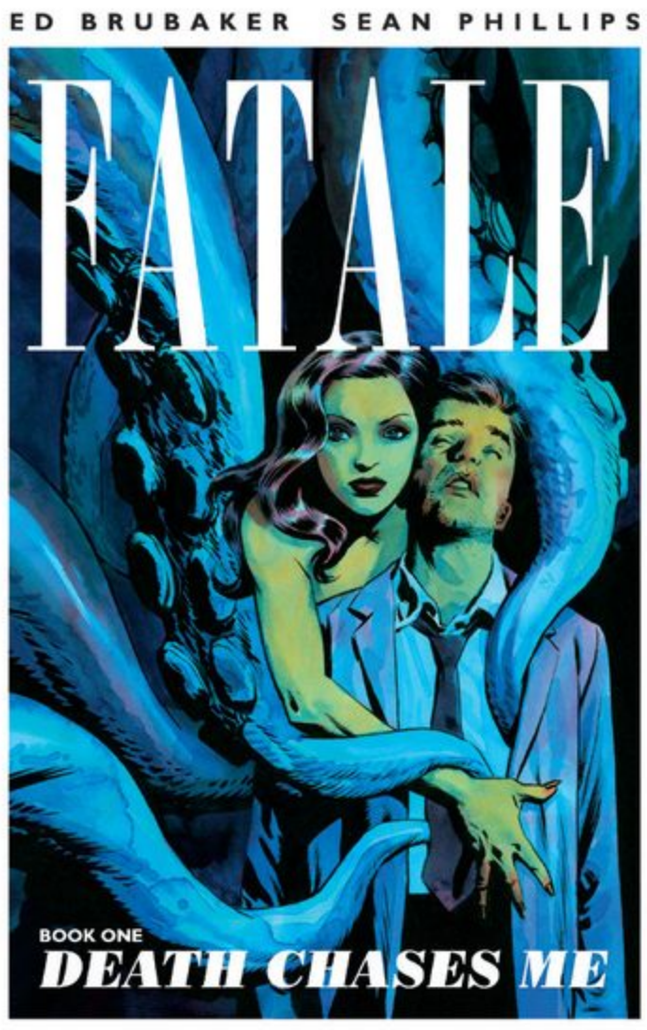
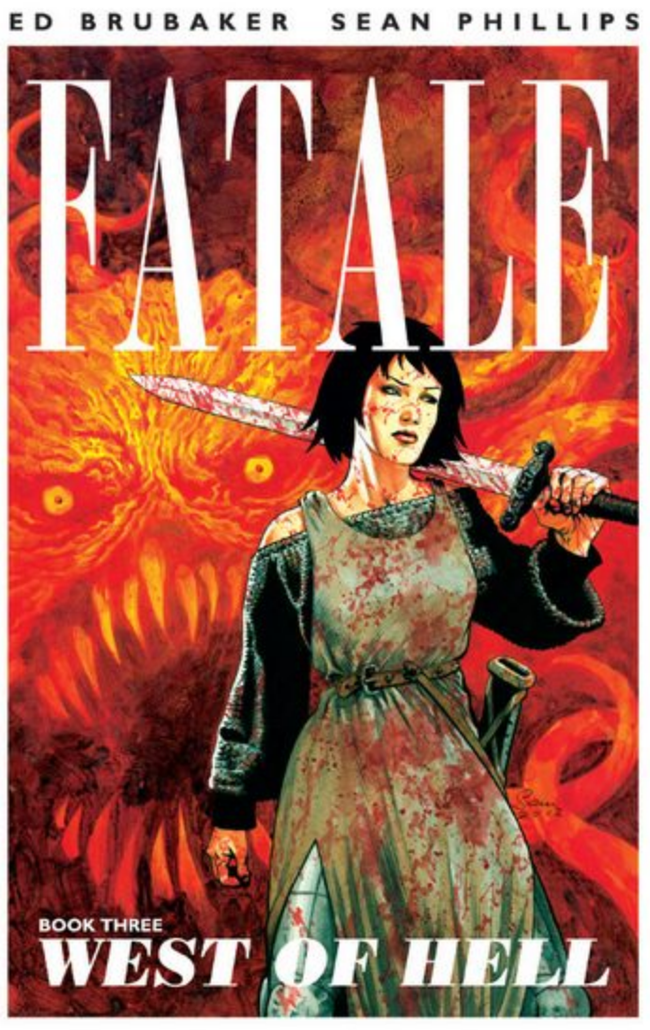
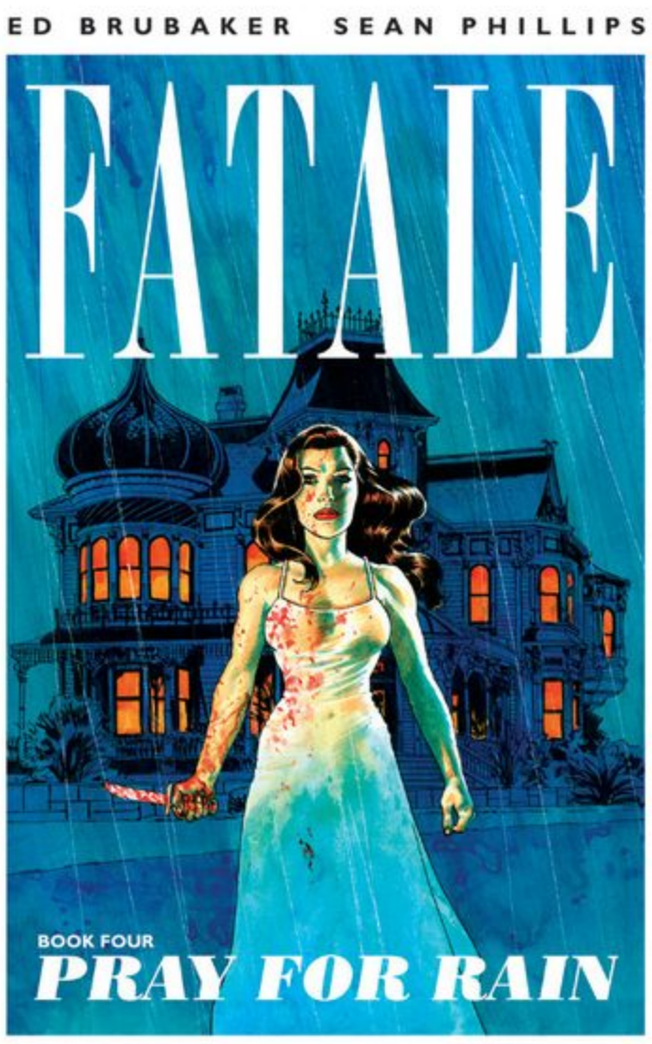
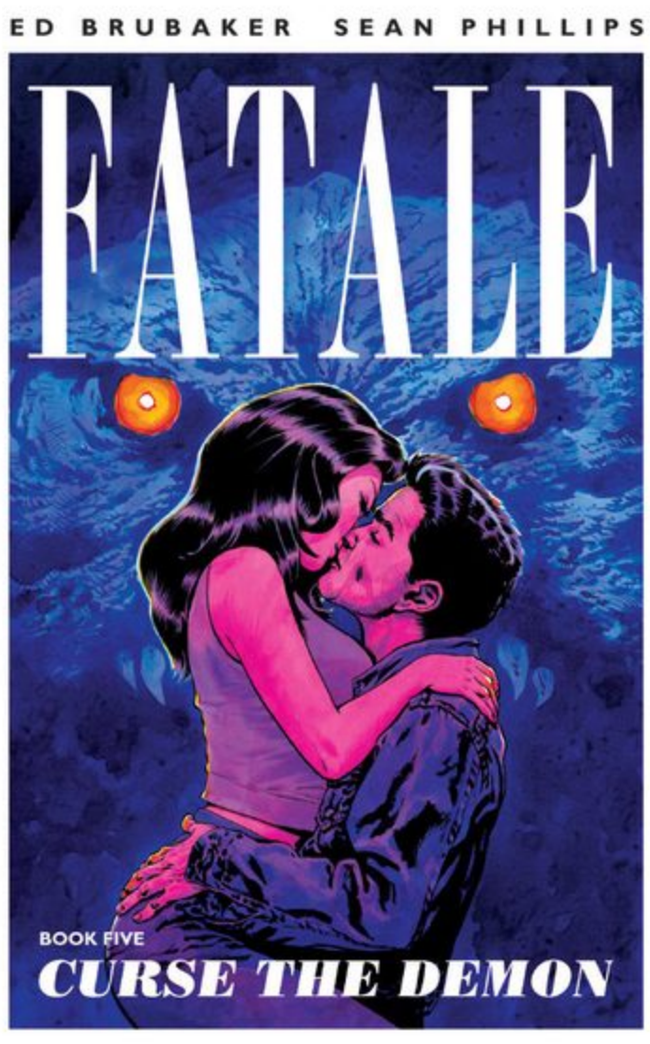

Volume Three
KILL or be KILLED
Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips
Elizabeth Breitweiser

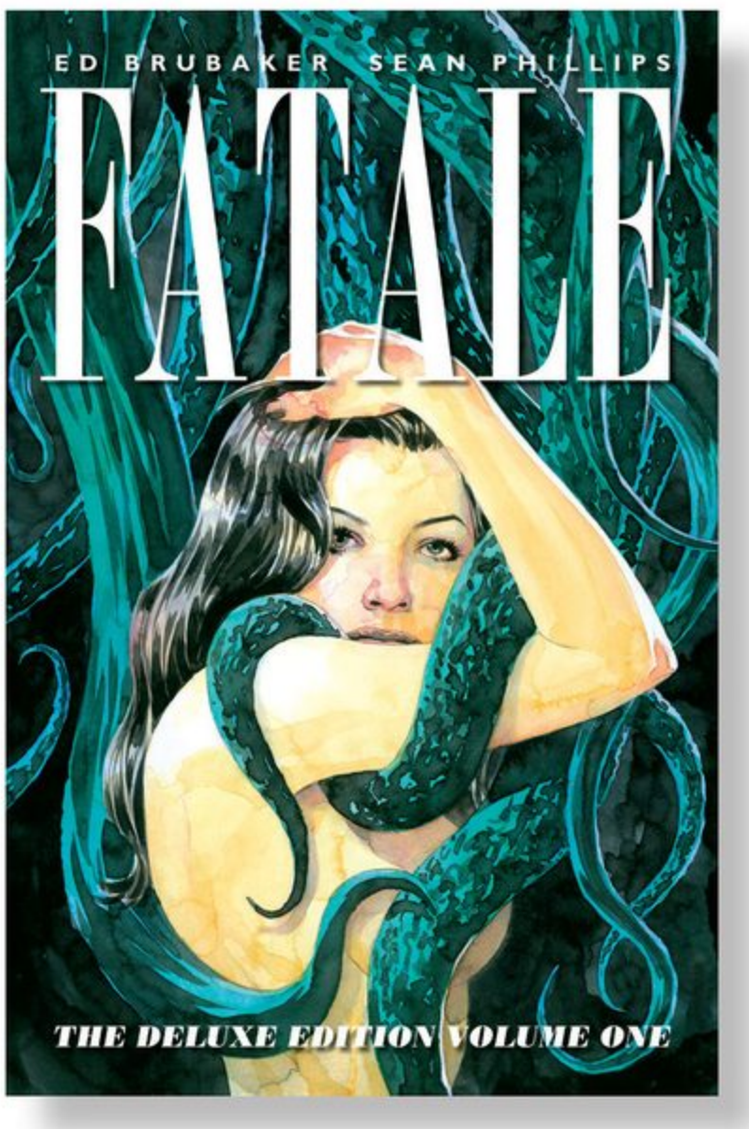

Volume Four
KILL or be KILLED
Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips
Elizabeth Breitweiser

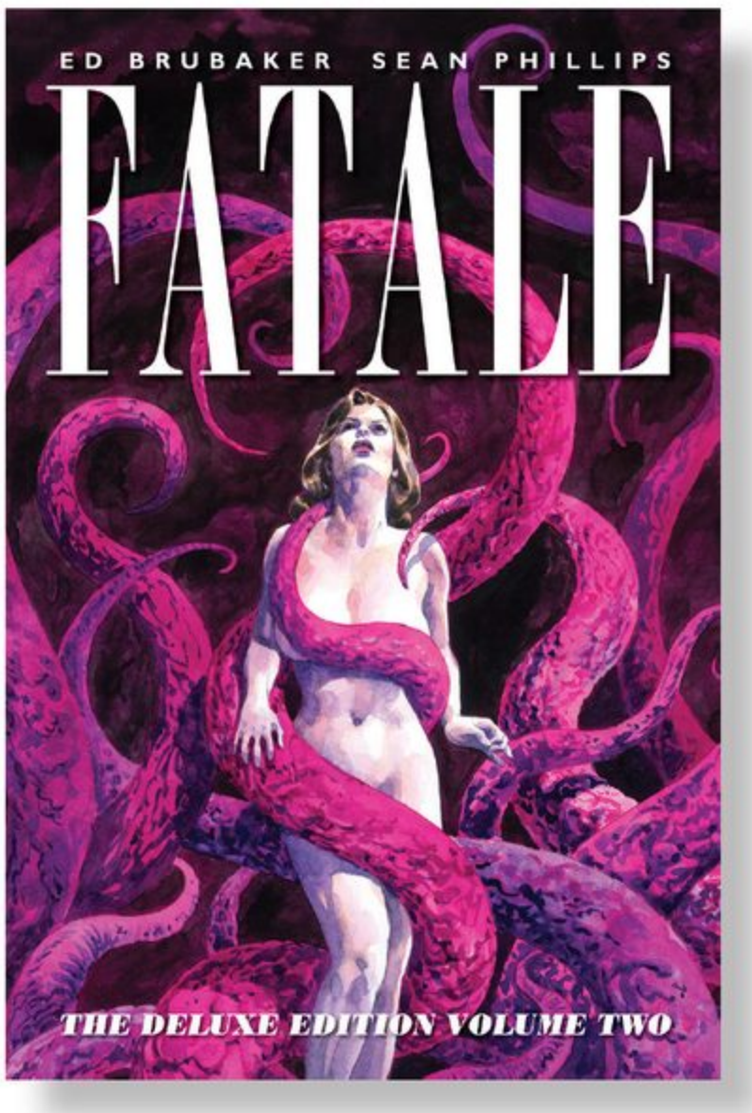












"Immortality may be a double-edged sword, but it's one the intoxicating Jo wields with a boundless grace in this addictive page-turner."
—Publishers Weekly

Number Ten

CRIMINAL

Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips
Jacob Phillips

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